

Earth Action Heroes protect the earth. Whether it's saving energy or guarding Bloomington's precious natural resources, these individuals are making a difference. Here are your neighbors in action ...



EARTH ACTION HEROES THE BUCKTHORN BUSTERS, CUB SCOUT PACK 473

WHEN THE BOYS OF CUB SCOUT PACK 473 CAME TO DEN MOTHER Mary Johnson looking for ideas on a conservation project, she picked up the phone. Wanting to do something locally, Johnson called Public Works Project Coordinator Jean Buckley who asked if the troops were prepared to battle buckthorn, a species that has invaded Bloomington's parks and neighborhoods. Johnson said they were.

On an afternoon last May, the boys and some of their parents, outfitted in long-sleeved shirts and jeans, reported for duty at Girard Lake Park, 8401 France Avenue South, to receive their instructions.

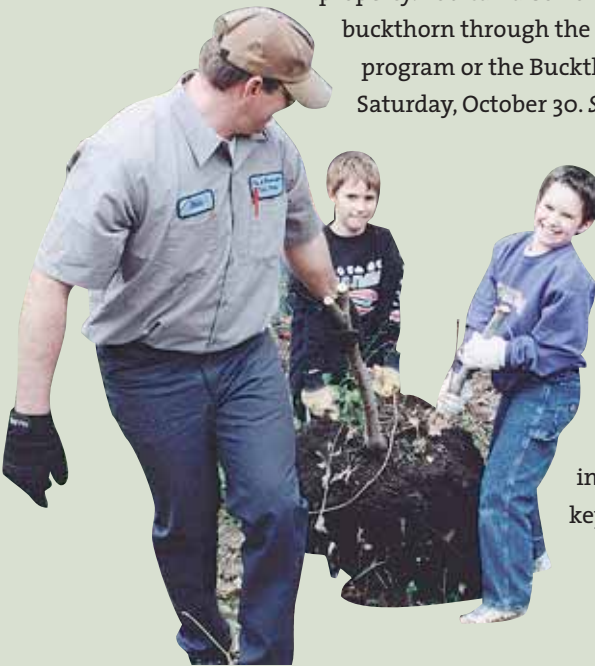
The activities began with a presentation from Park Maintenance's Dan Anderson who instructed the troops on how to identify and properly remove the noxious plant. Equipped with Weed Wrenches™ and loppers, the boys worked in teams. One boy lopped off the top of the buckthorn, while the other pulled it out of the ground. After about three hours of work, the Buckthorn Busters accomplished their mission and two dump truck loads of brush were hauled from the area.

For their efforts, the Cub Scouts of Pack 473 earned their conservation badges. Johnson said that they would love to continue with community service projects on a regular basis to show that the Cub Scouts are making a difference in the community. She said the buckthorn removal was a great overall project. Would the Cub Scouts concur?

"I can't believe I am saying this," said Cub Scout Jeremy Aldorfer. "But I want to go back out and pull more buckthorn."

Help stop the spread of buckthorn by removing it from your property. You can also volunteer to remove buckthorn through the City's Adopt-a-Park program or the Buckthorn Bust on Saturday, October 30. *See right.* Tool kits

for removing small plants are available for free rental. For more information, call 952-563-8751 or visit the City's Web site, www.ci.bloomington.mn.us, keyword: Buckthorn.



VALUABLE RESOURCES

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IMPROVE WATER QUALITY AND CLARITY

THE WETLANDS, PONDS AND LAKES IN BLOOMINGTON'S landscape are part of a constantly changing, dynamic system in which climate and the wetland's physical, chemical and biological characteristics affect water quality. Algae and vegetation grow when nutrients enter the water. Excessive plant growth reduces water clarity, often covering the entire surface with duckweed, watermeal and algae.

To improve overall water quality, it is increasingly important to reduce nutrients that reach wetlands. Common nutrient sources are lawn fertilizers, animal wastes, grass clippings and other yard wastes. All Bloomington residents can help prevent pollutants and excess nutrients from invading waterbodies by using phosphorus free fertilizers and by not sweeping leaves or grass clippings into the street. Those who live along the shorelines can also implement erosion control measures that include maintaining 10 to 20 feet strips of unmowed vegetation around wetlands and limiting their use of fertilizers.

The City currently treats some of Bloomington's ponds for weeds and algae, but these applications only treat the symptoms of high nutrient levels. The City has adopted a policy for protecting and treating its wetlands. To view the policy, visit www.ci.bloomington.mn.us, keywords: Wetland policy.



NATURAL SOLUTIONS FOR FILTERING POLLUTANTS MANAGING STORMWATER THROUGH RAIN GARDENS

LIKE MANY CITY GOVERNMENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, Bloomington's approach to managing stormwater is evolving. New practices are moving from water detention ponds and storm sewers that carry stormwater into our lakes and streams to low-impact

development (LID) alternatives. One natural choice is an infiltration basin or rain garden.

Rain gardens are slightly sunken areas planted with native grasses and perennials that hold rainwater, letting it seep gradually into the ground. This natural process filters polluted runoff and recharges groundwater supply.

City Planner Bob Sharlin said that the City challenges developers to provide new LID alternatives along with traditional methods to manage stormwater.

"There is no one answer to stormwater management and it may take a variety of alternatives," Sharlin said. "The goal is to provide a better overall site plan and better water treatment methods. Size and scope are factors to consider when using LID techniques. Rain gardens with their natural amenities are a good choice, particularly for smaller sites."

For more information, visit the City's Web site, www.ci.bloomington.mn.us, keywords: Rain garden.

BEAUTY FOLLOWS FUNCTION IN HOME LANDSCAPING CREATE YOUR OWN RAIN GARDEN

Homeowners can benefit from the practical beauty of a rain garden. Designed to hold rain and snow melt, these gardens can be as shallow as four to five inches or as deep as one to two feet and work in any kind of soil. Select plants that thrive in the sunny or shady conditions of your rain garden's location. To make your rain garden effective, choose a place next to a sidewalk, driveway or under a gutter.

BUST BUCKTHORN AT POND DAKOTA PARK VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO REMOVE INVADERS

BUCKTHORN GROWS QUICKLY, CHOKING OUT BENEFICIAL NATIVE trees, shrubs and wildflowers. Some wooded areas in Bloomington are infested with more than 90 percent invasive species.

Join Bloomington's Parks, Arts and Recreation (PARC) commissioners for a volunteer buckthorn bust. Chainsaws, handsaws and wrenching tools will be inching away at the state's most invasive, woody plant on **Saturday, October 30, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at Pond-Dakota Mission Park, 401 East 104th Street.**

If you would like to volunteer, meet at the Pond House for an identification and control method presentation. Wear sturdy shoes, jeans, long-sleeve shirts, eye protection and dress in layers. Some cutting and removal tools will be provided. Bring a bow saw, handsaw, lopping shears and hand shears if you have them. Label tools with your name and phone number.

The event is sponsored by Bloomington PARC and supported by the City's Parks and Recreation and Park Maintenance divisions. For more information, call 952-563-8877 or 952-941-6876.

